

Bush unlikely V-P choice, Nessen says

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WASHINGTON—The White House appeared today to shoot down the possibility of an "open convention" in which CIA Director George Bush might become a contender for the vice presidential nomination.

The possibility was raised earlier by House Minority Leader John Rhodes, who said this was one way in which Bush could be nominated without violating Ford's promise that Bush would not be considered for his running mate.

White House Press Secretary Ron Nessen appeared to rule out the open

"Jimmy Carter is just
southern fried George McGovern."
Connally interview on Page 4-A.

convention idea, saying, "The President will recommend his choice (for vice president) at the appropriate time."

He also said he has no reason to believe the President's thinking has changed since he assured senators that Bush would not be his running mate if he were confirmed as director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Rhodes, in an interview with the Washington Post Wednesday, said an open convention that would rank Bush alongside John B. Connally and Ronald Reagan as convention favorites was "highly possible."

Reagan has said he would not accept the vice presidency but, under circumstances of delegates choosing the running mate free of direction from the presidential nominee, he, too, would be subject to a draft unless he removed himself from consideration.

This is the first time Bush, former Texas congressman and former Republican National Committee chairman, has been mentioned as a possibility for vice president.

Senate objections to a politician in the sensitive CIA post forced President Ford last year to eliminate Bush from consideration for vice president if he

were confirmed as CIA director.

Rhodes said a Bush draft by delegates in an open convention would be the only way he could gain a place on the ticket without violating the President's promise.

Bush failed today to return a phone call, but a friend said he commented on reading the Post story, "It's not my problem, it's the President's."

Abiding by assurance to senators who approved his nomination as CIA director last December, Bush has remained removed from Republican party politics since returning from Peking, China, where he was chief U.S. liaison officer.

He was in Plains, Ga., earlier this week briefing Democratic presidential

nominee Jimmy Carter on foreign affairs, at President Ford's direction.

Connally, who endorsed Ford's candidacy Tuesday after maintaining a neutral position in the presidential contest, is widely considered to be the frontrunner as Ford's choice for the vice presidential nomination.

He also received majority votes as the choice of delegates to the Republican convention in recent polls made by United Press International and Associated Press.

Texas Gov. Dolph Briscoe talked politics with Democratic presidential nominee Jimmy Carter today in Plains, Ga., and said he does not believe the Republicans can carry Texas even if they put Connally on the ticket with Ford.

"Because of home state pride Connally on the ticket would be effective but not a determining factor," Briscoe said as he arrived at the airport in nearby Americus.

He said the campaign itself and the issues that are developed will determine the results.

Briscoe led a delegation of several Texas government officials and politicians who lunched with Carter.

Rhodes' remarks followed a half-hour conference with Ford at the White House earlier in the day. He told reporters immediately after the conference that the list of potential running mates was "large and growing" but he refused to name persons on the President's list.

In other developments concerning Connally's vice-presidential chances:

- The Los Angeles Times today reported that the once-rigid opposition within President Ford's inner circle to a Connally candidacy has greatly diminished. The Times reported that one campaign official, a longtime Connally admirer, said campaign chairman Rogers C. B. Morton, former Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, and deputy campaign director Stuart Spencer "have turned completely around on Connally" in recent weeks.

- Sen. William Brock, R-Tenn., said that Connally is "probably the most effective single candidate in the United States — bar none." Brock, a Ford supporter, said Connally could overcome any stigma of Watergate.

- Brock's colleague, Sen. Howard H. Baker, however, said that Ford will have to consider whether Connally is sufficiently "free of controversy" as a result of milk fund charges, of which he was acquitted. Baker, considered a vice-presidential possibility himself, urged Ford to choose a running mate from the "Sunbelt."